

# The Blue and the Gray

## Finding Civil War Records

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The Civil War began April 12, 1861 when the Confederacy fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina. Many battles were fought in the next four years. General Robert E. Lee surrendered April 9, 1865, however, the last Confederate general, Stand Watie, did not surrender until June 23, 1865. For summaries of the battles, see the CWSAC Battle Summaries at [www.nps.gov/hps/abpp/battles/bycampgn.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hps/abpp/battles/bycampgn.htm).

To find information about Civil War soldiers and sailors, try the following steps:

### Step 1. Identify an ancestor who may have served in the Civil War

Look at your ancestors' information to determine which match the following criteria:

- **Ages:** Most soldiers and sailors were men between the ages of 18 and 30, so they would have been born between 1831 and 1846. Some were as young as 10 or as old as 70, which widens the birth years to between 1791 and 1854.
- **Death:** Did your ancestor die between April 1861 and June 1865? Did he die in a Southern state or a different state than where his family was living? These might indicate that he died as a soldier in the Civil War.

### Step 2. Identify the county and state where your ancestor lived around 1861

If you do not know the county and state where your ancestor lived at the start of the war, check the following:

- The 1860 and 1870 federal censuses for the soldier or his family. The following have digital versions of the censuses: FamilySearch, Ancestry(\$), Fold3 (\$), and Heritage Quest (\$).
- Several states took censuses, usually in the years between the federal censuses. A list of links to articles about the censuses in each state is on the United States Census page in the FamilySearch Wiki article called 'United States Census State Censuses'.

### Step 3. Decide whether your soldier fought for the Union or the Confederacy

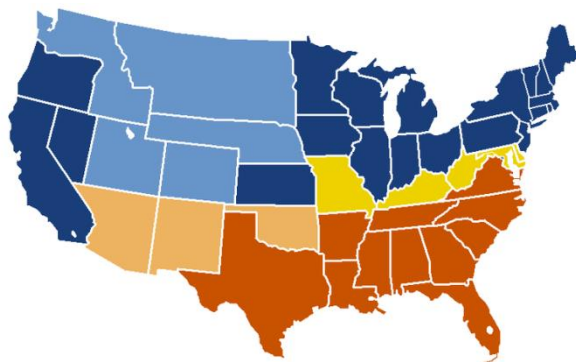
Civil War soldiers came from all over the continental United States. Note: Every state had some men who fought for the Union and some men who fought for the Confederacy. The map to the right shows the United States in 1863.

#### Confederacy

##### **11 states and 2 territories**

**States** = Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia

**Territories** = Arizona (Southern half of New Mexico and Arizona), Oklahoma



## **Union**

### **24 states and 7 territories**

**States** = California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Wisconsin

**Border States** 4 states were for the Union but had slaves. Many men served in the Confederacy as well as for the Union = Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, West Virginia

**Territories** = Colorado, Dakota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico (all of New Mexico and Arizona), Utah, Washington

More maps of the United States during the Civil War are available on the Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org) page, 'Territorial Evolution of the United States'.

### **Step 4. Find your soldier's regiment and company**

Your soldier's regiment and company are often needed to find his records and to recognize him in the records. Some records that often give companies and regiments are:

- Civil War Soldiers and Sailors database at [www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm](http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm)  
You may find several soldiers who match your ancestor. If this happens, copy the information about all of them and continue searching to eliminate all but one.
  - Look at each regiment Wiki page to find the county for the company or regiment. If some counties don't match what you know about your ancestor, this could eliminate some of the possible soldiers.
- 1890 Census of Union Veterans and Widows of the Civil War  
Information normally includes name, rank, company, regiment or vessel, date of enlistment, date of discharge, length of service, post office address, disability incurred, and remarks. Many Confederate veterans were mistakenly listed as well.

Unfortunately, the census pages were destroyed for the states in alphabetical order from Alabama through the western half of Kentucky. Surviving sections include Washington D.C., the eastern half of Kentucky, and the rest of the U.S. states in alphabetical order from Louisiana through Wyoming, the Indian territories, and U.S. ships and navy yards.

- *1890 Veterans Schedules*, Ancestry.com (\$), has every name index and images.
- *United States Census of Union Veterans and Widows of the Civil War, 1890*, FamilySearch.org has every name index and images.

State censuses sometimes asked for information on military service. For instance, the Iowa 1895 State Census asked for information about the company, regiment, state, and rank of those who fought in the War of the Rebellion (Civil War).

## Step 5. Check the Wiki article for your ancestor's regiment

The indexes for Civil War soldiers often list more than one soldier with the same name in the same state. By finding the counties for the companies in a regiment, you will have additional information to help determine which might be your ancestor.

On the regiment page, the list of companies will give the county or counties where many men were recruited.

**Note:** The Research Wiki will eventually have information about each regiment including links to Internet sites, lists of books, etc. If the Research Wiki does not yet have information about your ancestor's regiment, please check back. If you know additional information about the regiment or company, please add it or it will be added, if you put the information in the Wiki submission form: [https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/FamilySearch\\_Wiki:Content\\_Submission\\_Form](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/FamilySearch_Wiki:Content_Submission_Form).

## Step 6. Search Internet Databases

Many Internet sites have information about the Civil War and those who fought. Three sites that have broad coverage rather than just 1 or 2 states are Ancestry, Fold3, and FamilySearch.

- Ancestry (\$) has many records, both published and manuscript, about the American Civil War.
- Fold3 (\$) has digitized many of the Civil War records at NARA.
- FamilySearch Historical Record Collections is digitizing Civil War records.

## Step 7. Check sources listed on the following Wiki pages

- United States Civil War, 1861 to 1865, Part 2, describes records and resources on the national level.
- **[state] in the Civil War** describes state records and resources. See the list for links to the state pages.
- The regiment article for the regiment of your soldier gives information about the regiment and its companies with links to the counties where the companies recruited men. For links to the regiment pages, see the table on the state page.
- The county page for the county where a company recruited men describes county records and resources. This is a good way to find records about an ancestor and his family.

## Online Classes about the Civil War

- Beth Foulk, Civil War: Genealogical Research, 46 minutes
- David A. Lambert, Identifying Civil War Ancestors in Your Family Tree, 9 minutes
- Jean Wilcox Hibben, Civil War Research: Learning about Your Union Veteran Ancestor, Part 1, 31 minutes.
- Jean Wilcox Hibben, Civil War Research: Learning about Your Union Veteran Ancestor, Part 2, 27 minutes
- Russell Lynch, Military Records: Civil War, 35 minutes

## Decide what else you want to find.

Focus your research by deciding to find just one or two things, such as age, death date and place, pension record, or service record.

The US Military Record Selection Table below shows which type of military record has the various types of information you may want to find.

Look in →	Service	Pension	Bounty Land	Draft	Cemetery	Soldier Homes	Veteran/ Lineage Society	Military Biography
Age	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Birth date		■		■	■	■	■	■
Birth place	■	■		■		■	■	■
Children		■				■	■	
Death date	■	■	■		■	■	■	■
Death place	■	■					■	■
Spouse, Marriage		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Military Unit	■	■	■		■	■	■	■
Occupation	■			■		■	■	■
Parents							■	
Physical description	■	■		■		■		
Residence	■	■	■	■		■	■	■
Service history	■		■				■	■

## Other Civil War Records

- Regiment Records
- Casualty Reports
- Citizens Files
- Final Statements
- Adjutant Generals Reports and Letters
- Southern Claims Commission
- Confederate Amnesty Records

If the Research Wiki does not yet have information about your ancestor's regiment, please check back.